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appellate tribunals of criticism" (whose notice and favour he confidently expects,) for abler censure or worthier commendation than ours ; and in parting, we beg him, whatever he may do for the improvement of our boys in speaking, by all means to let their composition alone.

Airs of Palestine ; a Poem : by John Pierpont, Esq. Second Edition. Boston : published by Wells and Lilly. 1817.

THEY who have seen in Europe, genius looking to the press as the only means of reward, have little notion how small a portion of the talent and literature of this country flow through that channel ; they know not how many offices of power and trust, all in the gift of the people, and all with high requisitions of information are necessary to conduct our complicated system of confederate government ; they know not the price of talent we pay for our liberties and their security. We can spare few of our citizens from the necessary labours of life, and they are all employed in one form or the other in governing the rest. No sooner is a man of talent exempted by fortune from labour, than he is involved in politicks ; and in a *government of opinions* like ours, where individual intellect has full scope for its ambition, few will be content with the barren praise of scholarship. In Europe the avenues of office are crowded with applicants, and disappointed genius turns to literature for bread : here our increasing population, peculiar form of government, and the republican doctrine of rotation in office, create a constant demand of talent for the publick service.

With this opinion of the comparative talent and literature of our country, we are pleased with the appearance of a poem like the *Airs of Palestine*, not because it discovers more poetical power than we believe many of our countrymen to possess, but because we are glad to see so much talent redeemed from other pursuits. Nor, to confess our individual opinion, is the merit of this performance the immediate cause of the importance we attach to it ; single and unsupported it can do little for the encouragement of our

literature or the reputation of the country. It has delighted us in the perusal, and we shall often turn to it with pleasure as its splendid images grow dim in our minds : but this is not all ; its merit is a promise of future excellence, and the applause it has received, is given as much to animate as to reward. After the specimen Mr. Pierpont has here exhibited of his powers of poetry, he will not readily be excused if he rests contented with the fame he has already acquired ; he owes much to literature, his country and himself ; what he has done is enough to convince us he possesses ability to excel ; but of this his friends needed no proof, and with this the publick will not be satisfied. He may doubtless engage with success in pursuits in themselves more useful, but he may well resign them to those who have not his power of refining the feelings and gratifying the taste. Our countrymen have hitherto consecrated their talents to the service of their own age only, leaving nothing to posterity but their example ; if he too will devote his genius and taste to a profession, we hope at least that he will not forget his earlier pursuits : we hope at some time to receive from him a work even better than this, on a subject admitting greater invention and more of the graces of poetry.

The *Airs of Palestine* is of a kind of poetry that may be called *moral descriptive*. Its subject is musick, principally as connected with sacred history, but with occasional digressions into the land of mythology and romance. It has no unity of plan, but consists of a succession of brilliant pictures with little attempt at methodical arrangement. Beginning with the confusion of languages at the destruction of Babel, when musick is represented as a mode of intercourse substituted for that community of speech, which the inhabitants of the earth before enjoyed, it proceeds relating some of the most striking incidents of scripture history, displaying the power and effects of musick. These with a few fancy pieces, sketched with much spirit and grace, and rather a long account of Chateaubriand, with a versification of several passages from his travels (little of which is very appropriate to the subject, or adds much to the interest of the work) compose the materials. As the poem is short, our limits will allow us to follow the author through it ; this course will perhaps give a better idea of its

general design, and at the same time allow a more detailed examination of its parts, than any other mode of remark.

The simile with which the subject is introduced, probably suggested by the opening of the *Pleasures of Hope*, to which poem this bears some analogy, is not a happy illustration, nor in the author's best manner. Nothing would have been lost had the poem commenced with the succeeding lines:

“ All was not lost, though busy Discord flung
Repulsive accents from each jarring tongue.”

But even then follows a figure which it would require much critical logick to justify; the *tie* that “love had twined, and “mercy dropp’d,” after winding round the soul, binding man to man, and *soothing* passion's strife, one would think had performed offices enough, without being made a clue through the labyrinths of earth to heaven. After this introduction, which is by no means a fair specimen of the work, musick is well described in her effects on the brute creation, as well as on man, and her influence in religion; though there is something too much of chemical detail in the following lines, where the heart is represented as passing regularly by the united agency of religion and musick from a solid to an aëriform fluid:

“ And when Religion's mild and genial ray,
Around the frozen heart begins to play,
Musick's soft breath falls on the quivering light;
The fire is kindled, and the flame is bright;
And that cold mass, by either power assail'd,
Is warm'd—made liquid—and to heaven exhal'd.”

The subject being thus proposed, the poet places us on an eminence, which overlooks all the beauties of landscape, and the charms of classick ground. He describes the scene in lines of uncommon grace and enthusiasm; allured at first by the remembrance of Grecian story, his eye wanders rapidly over its enchanted fields, but turns from them to Palestine. This passage is too beautiful to be divided and its length will not permit us to extract the whole. The scene of his sacred song is not however so well described; the passage is encumbered with unmeaning epithets and

indistinct imagery, and has no merit that could claim for it a place between two descriptions so splendid as those it divides.

We here notice the first occurrence of a fault that has offended our ear more than any thing in the poem ; we allude to the double rhymes. These are so often repeated that they must be charged to the poet's taste, and not to accident or necessity ; they do not indeed seem to be sought, but they are introduced without apparent reason, and we are surprised that a taste so chastised, as Mr. Pierpont has exhibited in many other respects, should not have revolted from this violation of the simple majesty of the heroic measure. The *Airs of Palestine* is a poem on subjects the most solemn and sacred, and the author has wisely chosen the only mode of verse our language offers worthy of their dignity. It is a measure capable of every variety of dignified expression, and much better deserves the encomium Dr. Beattie has paid to the stanza of Spenser. It has indeed somewhat gone out of fashion, in this troubled reign of ballad mongers and song-wrights ; it is too laborious for the present race of poets, who with the power of being great, aspire only to be popular and rich ; while the publick will bear it, and half a crown a line is paid by publishers, no wonder those lines should be made as short as possible. The decision of true taste, however, on both sides the Atlantick confirms the choice of the great masters of English poetry ; and the ten syllable verse begins now to look not quite so long and stiff to fashionable readers. Of this verse Mr. Pierpont has in the poem before us given in general a correct and elegant specimen ; the only exceptions are the too frequent use of alliteration, and the great fault of double rhymes. These last are evidently favourites with the author, and when we censure them, we are of course at issue with him on a question of taste. On such a point we certainly do not think lightly of Mr. Pierpont's opinion ; if deliberately expressed in opposition to us, even in judging himself, it would oblige us critically to revise our own : but with all due deference we see no sufficient reason for this innovation. The jingle of a double rhyme is a childish ornament which shocks an ear accustomed to the severe simplicity of pure iambicks ; it may sometimes be introduced, with good effect, into

the lighter kinds of poetry, but it has so long been appropriated to the travestie and burlesque, that association unites with taste to condemn it. That has been defined to be the best style of prose, that least intrudes on the observation of the reader ; to apply the remark in its full extent to poetry, would be excluding all the graces of mere diction, to which it owes much of its charm. But though an epithet merely beautiful, and a figure that adorns without illustrating, be legitimate ornaments of poetry, the spirit of the rule is yet applicable to versification. Poetry should be a union of eloquence and musick : it is the object of the poet while he suggests noble and affecting images, to clothe them in numbers whose mechanical effect, independent of the sentiments, shall prepare the mind for their reception. This is the only legitimate object of verse : to please the ear is a trivial task, if it be not made subservient to higher purposes. Versification then to produce its full effect should vary with the subject ; and where that is of too intellectual and abstract a nature to be followed by simple intonation, the most that verse can do is to play an accompaniment that shall harmonize with the general tone of the sentiment ; then the art of the poet is so to manage his verse as not to disturb the sublimity it cannot highten, or the quiet beauty it cannot adorn. For subjects, therefore, of this kind, the monotony of the plain heroick verse is peculiarly adapted, because the ear soon becomes accustomed to it, and we lose in its unvaried smoothness, all thought that would interfere with the current of our feelings. And it is evident that unless some peculiar effect is intended to be produced in the reader, all sudden changes in the verse, or rhyme, should be avoided, as they necessarily recall the rapt attention. They are sometimes productive of fine effect when judiciously introduced : in Alexander's feast, that splendid exhibition of the power of verse, so much are the rapid changes of the scene aided by corresponding varieties of rhyme and metre, that musick could add nothing to its effect ; it is itself a study for the greatest musicians. There, through every mode of verse, the idea burns along with such rapidity, that we are scarcely sensible of the changes, that are adapted with such exquisite skill, to the scenes described and the varying emotions of the mind. Every feeling of the reader is anticipated, and met with its peculiar

language ; and few we believe have ever read it, without reposing on the quiet flow of the concluding strain, exhausted by the impetuous current of their thoughts. Much of this effect is undoubtedly produced by the versification ; but this art can only be successfully employed where sudden and violent emotions are to be excited ; in subjects susceptible of little enthusiasm, or where the enthusiasm is that of sentiment, not of passion, the most simple and unvaried metre is the best. We remember an instance where we felt this disagreeable interruption of double rhyme in Byron's *Giaour* ; it is in that exquisite comparison of the faded glory of Greece to the chilling loveliness of a corpse—a passage too well remembered and too often quoted to need a repetition here. We would ask Mr. Pierpont if his feelings suffered no shock from the lines

“ Before decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers.”

But enough, and more than enough, has been said on this point : we do not think Mr. Pierpont's taste will justify the predilection of his ear ; of the effect in his own poem he has perhaps by frequent repetition ceased to be a judge, but as a question of taste on general principles we willingly leave it with him. The frequent occurrence of the fault could alone have induced us to animadvert on it so much at large. And we are willing to confess it is sometimes used, in the livelier parts of the poem with so much grace, that we do not wish to see it altered. One example of this will also illustrate some other of the preceding remarks on verse : it is the description of morning :

“ Then plays a mournful prelude, while the star
Of morning fades :—but when heaven's gates unbar,
And on the world a tide of glory *rushes*,
Burns on the hill, and down the valley *blushes*.”

The first exemplification of the effect of musick, is the song of Moses, and the Israelites, on the destruction of Pharaoh's host :

O'er the cleft sea, the storm in fury rides :
Israel is safe, and Egypt tempts the tides :

Her host, descending, meets a wat'ry grave,
And o'er her monarch rolls the reflux wave.
The storm is hush'd : the billows foam no more,
But sink in smiles :—there's musick on the shore.
On the wide waste of waters, dies that air
Unheard ; for all is death and coldness there.
But see ! the robe that brooding Silence throws
O'er Shur reclining in profound repose,
Is rent, and scattered, by the burst of praise,
That swells the song th' astonish'd Hebrews raise.
That rending anthem on the wild was flung,
From Miriam's timbrel and from Moses' tongue :
The first to Liberty that e'er was sung."

This is beautiful throughout : the figure in the ninth and succeeding lines is carried at least as far as propriety admits. It may perhaps be liable to censure, but we do not feel inclined to apply it.

Next follow the song and death of Moses and the destruction of Jericho. The order of events is here reversed, as the siege of Jericho is made to take place after the fight at Gibeon. The wonderful events of the latter are thus mentioned :

" Whose veteran arm, already taught to urge
The battle stream, and roll its darkest surge,
Hangs over Jericho's devoted towers,
And, like the storm o'er Sodom, redly lowers ?
The moon can answer ; for she heard his tongue,
As cold and pale o'er Ajalon she hung.
The sun can tell :—O'er Gibeon's vale of blood,
Curving their beamy necks, his coursers stood,
Held by that hero's arm, to light his wrath,
And roll their glorious eyes upon his crimson path."

We do not think the mythological fiction of the chariot of the sun, has grandeur enough to procure it a place in modern poetry ; it doubtless had its effect when connected with ancient superstition and in an ancient poet is for that reason still beautiful ; such beauties however do not bear transplanting, and they are particularly misplaced in a poem on subjects like the present. This repetition of old figures and fictions is a fatal obstacle to the progress of poetry : once settle it that because classical they are always admissible and we become mere imitators. Admit-

ting the excellence of ancient models, we can certainly rise as high by pursuing other paths, as by treading in their steps. This is not intended to apply particularly to the passage quoted, for the beauty of its execution redeems all fault in the idea.

Next comes the hermit of Mount Libanus, and an animated description of the charms an enthusiastick mind may find in the most desert scenes; the musick of irrational nature living and inanimate displays the attributes of Deity and warms, instructs and encourages the 'solitary man.' This is in a strain of easy and elegant poetry.

Elijah's flight to mount Horeb is then noticed, but the sublimity of the original, seems to have embarrassed Mr. Pierpont; he has not attempted to describe the tempest, the earthquake, and the fire, though the scene would be here peculiarly appropriate as a comment on the preceding passage. Perhaps however he judged rightly—the original is inimitable; yet we cannot but regret that it should have been omitted, since he has succeeded on a subject of the same nature, and at least as difficult. The descent of the Eternal on Mount Sinai, which immediately follows, is as perfect as the subject will admit.—Mr. Pierpont has succeeded well, where it is great praise not to fail.

The beautiful story of the power of musick in calming the troubled mind of Saul, loses nothing in the hands of our author. The description of David's boyhood is, however, a little obscured by the unseasonable intervention of the poet, in his own person; we know of no figure of poetry or rhetorick that allows him to mingle in scenes so long gone by. What is the meaning of the last of these lines?

"Still, on his brow the crown of Israel gleams,
And cringing courtiers still adore its beams,
Though the bright circle throws no light divine,
But rays of hell, that melt it while they shine."

There is a fine idea in these where the demon

"—— sees the dawns of too bright a sky;
Detects the angel in the poet's eye."

The song of the angels at the advent of our Saviour is preceded by a brilliant and poetical personification of the con-

stellations ; after which follows the deliverance of Paul and Silas, from the prison at Philippi. This produces some good lines though the whole is rather indifferent.

“The wretch, who long, in dungeons cold and dank,
Had shook his fetters, that their iron clank
Might break the grave-like silence of that prison—”

Is this natural ? Is there not on the contrary something in deep silence, productive of a dread of hearing even the noise of our own motions ? The idea certainly is more striking.

The hymn sung by the Saviour and his disciples, on the Mount of Olives, excites a melancholy feeling that proceeds rather from the interest of the subject, than from the manner in which it is here related. This and the preceding passage we think the worst part of the poem.

“————the diamond lights on high,
Burn bright and dance harmonious through the sky ;”

is very faulty ; the expression is entirely inconsistent with the majesty of the sublimest works of nature. And certainly nothing uncommon happens when

“*The moon above, the wave beneath is still.*”

Here the poet takes his leave of Palestine, and turns to the deserts of Paraguay ; he pictures well the wild luxuriance of nature in her varieties of uncultivated beauty. To give life to the silent scene, where

“———— at times, the musing pilgrim hears
A crumbling oak fall with the weight of years—”

a Jesuit missionary is introduced in the following lines, of which the first are extracted for their beauty, and the last for their obscurity :

“Round the bold front of yon projecting cliff,
Shoots, on white wings, the missionary’s skiff,
And, walking steadily along the tide,
Seems, like a phantom, o’er the wave to glide,

Unfolding to the breeze her light cymar,
 And bearing on her breast the Apostolick star.
 That brilliant orb the bless'd Redeemer hurl'd,
 From his pierc'd hand, ere he forsook the world.
 Lanch'd by that hand, the sphere, divinely bright,
 Has left, on eastern clouds, its path of light,
 And, in a radiant curve, descends to bless
 Parana's wave, Paraguay's wilderness."

The last six lines we cannot understand, in any way worthy of the author. The following is an apt illustration of our observations on the use of double rhyme :

"Heed not the foe, that yells defiance nigh,
 See not the deer, that dashes wildly by,
 Drop from their hand the bow and rattling quiver.
 Crowd to the shore, and plunge into the river."

We did not expect when we began, to meet in the *Airs of Palestine* a French minister of state ; the next subject however is Chateaubriand, his works and travels. These we do not think very happily introduced, though they give occasion to a description of the power of musick on a serpent, which we should be glad to extract, but for the claims of the moonlight scene that succeeds it. This we must insert entire, as a specimen of descriptive poetry scarcely exceeded by any in our remembrance :

"On Arno's bosom, as he calmly flows,
 And his cool arms round Vallombrosa throws,
 Rolling his crystal tide through classick vales,
 Alone,—at night,—the Italian boatman sails.
 High o'er Mont Alto walks, in maiden pride,
 Night's queen :—he sees her image on that tide,
 Now, ride the wave that curls its infant crest,
 Around his prow, then rippling sinks to rest ;
 Now, glittering dance around his eddying oar,
 Whose every sweep is echoed from the shore ;
 Now, far before him, on a liquid bed
 Of waveless water, rest her radiant head.
 How mild the empire of that virgin queen !
 How dark the mountain's shade ! how still the scene !
 Hush'd by her silver sceptre, zephyrs sleep
 On dewy leaves, that overhang the deep,

Nor dare to whisper through the boughs, nor stir
 The valley's willow, nor the mountain's fir,
 Nor make the pale and breathless aspen quiver,
 Nor brush, with ruffling wing, that glassy river.

"Hark!—'tis a convent's bell :—its midnight chime.
 For musick measures even the march of Time :—
 O'er bending trees, that fringe the distant shore,
 Gray turrets rise :—the eye can catch no more.
 The boatman, listening to the tolling bell,
 Suspends his oar :—a low and solemn swell,
 From the deep shade, that round the cloister lies,
 Rolls through the air, and on the water dies.
 What melting song wakes the cold ear of Night ?
 A funeral dirge, that pale nuns, rob'd in white,
 Chant round a sister's dark and narrow bed,
 To charm the parting spirit of the dead.
 Triumphant is the spell ! with raptur'd ear,
 That uncaged spirit hovering lingers near ;—
 Why should she mount ? why pant for brighter bliss,
 A lovelier scene, a sweeter song, than this !"

Where is there "a sweeter song than this?" How perfect is the conception, and how delicate the execution!

The descriptive part of the poem closes with the story of a minstrel's day, of which the scene is laid in the Scottish mountains. The glory of the morning, the mountain scenery, and the ardour of the poet, are well painted ; there is a freshness and individuality in the picture that mark a strong conception. As the passage just extracted is the best of the work, so this is the most animated, and they might be contrasted with advantage if we had not already quoted so largely. The minstrel is led through scenes of beauty and sublimity,

"Till night descends, and round the wanderer flings
 The dew-drops dripping from her dusky wings."

The beauties of the day are then exchanged for the terrors of darkness heightened by tempest and ruins. Thus far the idea is well pursued ; but the childish fears of the boy are a subject of too little dignity to close the scene : though the "mountain blast" and the "thundering tides" are effects worthy of the Spirit to whom they are ascribed,

the "ghost's red eye," the "lamp sepulchral," the "meteor" and the "glow worm," are the silly terrors of romance, and unworthy of the occasion and the Agent.

It is a subject of regret, that this episode was not better concluded; it has much beauty, and though probably suggested by the "Minstrel," has no such resemblance to it as to lose the praise of originality; but surely the author could have formed a better idea of the effect of those "mightiest" powers of nature that are "kept in reserve till night," than such a goblin adventure.

The immediate close of the poem consists of an address to Deity, in which there is little to remark; it is too long, and would have been more appropriate to the original design of the poem than its present destination.*

We have omitted to mention, or noticed but incidentally, several minor faults that occur more than once. They are not important, but their repetition demands remark. The principal defects of the poem are those of taste; the author seldom fails from weakness, though he often errs in judgment. He has much splendour of imagery, yet we think he often pursues a figure too far. His epithets are occasionally misapplied: "loose wings," "purple air," "purple odours," &c.; his alliteration passes the bounds of good taste and authority. Standard poets seldom extend it beyond two continuous words. Mr. Pierpont gives us one line where, out of ten syllables, seven begin with the same letter:

"The lordly lion leaves his lonely lair."

The verse is however in general uncommonly correct and musical; very few lines could be selected that are not perfectly well modulated, and we believe there is not an exceptionable rhyme in the poem; the author has not been content to keep within the pale of authority on this point, but has in every instance conformed to a more rigid system of his own. We think there is not to be found in succession, in any English poem the same number of perfect rhymes.

We have thus followed the author to the conclusion, and we close the volume with a high opinion of Mr. Pierpont's

*"It was originally intended that the recitation of this poem should form a part of the performances of an evening concert of sacred musick for charitable purposes."

power of poetry. The mode of review we have adopted is certainly not favourable to the faults of a work ; but the *Airs of Palestine* has too much merit to suffer from it. Had it been an indifferent poem, we should have noticed it in a more summary way, and passed over faults we despaired of correcting ; but it has too much taste and beauty to be made the mere basis of an essay and dismissed without scrutiny ; and if this superiority has given a proportionate prominence to its defects, Mr. Pierpont must be content to suffer the common penalty of eminence. Yet though we have endeavoured to speak of it with perfect impartiality, we fear on looking back on our remarks, we have not said so much in its praise as it deserves ; we have passed without notice many of its beauties, and if our censures have in any instance done injustice to Mr. Pierpont, our readers who may be induced to purchase the book will at least acquit us of disappointing them by unmerited praise.



Abstract of Meteorological Observations for October, 1816 ; taken at Brunswick, by Professor Cleaveland.

Mean monthly temperature, from three observations each day,	-	-	-	-	49.86°
Mean monthly temperature, from maxima of heat and cold,	-	-	-	-	48.16
Greatest heat,	-	-	-	-	76.00
Greatest cold,	-	-	-	-	23.50
Mean height of the Barometer	-	-	-	-	29.809 inches.
Greatest monthly range of do.	-	-	-	-	.890
Quantity of rain,	-	-	-	-	6.165
Days entirely or chiefly fair,	-	-	-	17	
do. do. do. cloudy,	-	-	-	14	

Directions of the winds in proportional numbers, viz. :—
S. W. 15—N. W. 15—N. E. 7—E. 3—W. 2—S. 2—S. E. 2—N. 1. A little snow fell on the 7th.

NOVEMBER, 1816.

Mean monthly temperature, from three observations each day,	-	-	-	-	39.52°
Mean monthly temperature, from maxima of heat and cold,	-	-	-	-	37.66